Faith in Christ, and Life Everlasting.

126.

A

SERMON

Occasioned by the Death of

The Rev. Mr. John Auther,

Who departed this Life, *July* 10, 1762,

In the Seventy-fourth Year of his Age.

By BENJAMIN WALLIN.

LONDON:

Printed for the WIDOW, and sold by G. Keith, in *Gracechurch-Street*, and J. Buckland and T. Field, in *Paternoster-Row*. MDCCLXII.

[Price Six-pence.]

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A

SERMON

BRITISH MUSEUM

BENJAMIN WALLIN:

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Printed for WILDOW, and Son by
C. Reeve, in Cranbourn-Street, and
J. Buckland and T. Field, in Pater-
noster-Row. MDCCLXII.

(Price Six pence.)

JOHN xi. 26.

And whoſoever liveth and believeth in me ſhall never die.

IT was the death of an amiable and beloved friend that introduced the diſcourſe, in which our Lord delivered theſe important and myſtical words: and what more adapted to quicken and refreſh our hearts under the ſame kind of trouble than the glorious truth they contain? I have therefore ſelected the paſſage on this mournful occaſion: a paſſage which, as a living ſtream, flows freely from the fountain of life, that thro' patience and comfort thereof we might have hope, even at the ſwellings of *Jordan*. Bleſſed be God, though all fleſh is as graſs, which withereth and falleth away, his goſpel abideth for ever; in which life and immortality are brought clearly to light; and we have here a conſideration which, duly applied, cannot fail to ſuſtain and re-

vive us under our preſent affliction. May the Divine Comforter render it effectual; that thoſe who believe may be confirmed and rejoiced; and may this opportunity be happily ſubſervient to the ſalvation of any who are yet ſtrangers to that faith in Jeſus, which is the ſubject of our text, and which alone can yield a well grounded hope of the bleſſing inſured!

To theſe valuable ends I crave your Attention, while I take a ſhort view of the ſtory of which our text is a part, open its contents, and make ſome ſuitable reflections.

Firſt. From the preceding context we learn, that our Lord was led to this declaration in the following manner: a family, the principals of which conſiſted of a brother and two ſiſters, who lived together in the utmoſt harmony and affection, moſt pleaſing to behold, and in whom our Lord took a peculiar delight, was overtaken with diſtreſs: while Jeſus was at a diſtance from theſe beloved diſciples, in purſuit of his miniſtry, the brother, called *Lazarus*, was ſeized with a threatening and mortal diſeaſe, of which the ſiſters immediately acquaint him: they had the greateſt dependance on his affection and power, and no doubt expected he would haſten to their relief; but lo! he delayeth

even

even till *Lazarus* was dead and laid in his grave! How aſtoniſhing ſometimes are the ways of the Almighty! what an appearance of unkindneſs and cruelty is here; not to viſit, and, with all expedition, aſſiſt ſo valuable friends in ſuch ſorrow and danger! But Jeſus knew all things; he knew the death of his friend was determined, that being by him revived, he, the Son of God, ſhould be glorified in the ſight of an infidel world, and his diſciples eſtabliſhed. Such was the Event, and who ſhall complain? Shall not the Moſt High take away a life, and, for ends ſo worthy himſelf, reſtore it again at his pleaſure? Thus we ſee through this ſtartling providence, and are enabled to look beyond the ſeeming ſeverity of ſo ſudden and mournful a ſtroke, and to admire the goodneſs, wiſdom, and power of God conſpicuous therein: Hence learn, O afflicted Chriſtian, patience and ſubmiſſion under the darkeſt diſpenſations: in due time he will bring thee forth to the light, and thou ſhalt alſo behold his righteouſneſs.

But to return. Four days after *Lazarus*'s deceaſe the Saviour comes, which *Martha*, one of the ſiſters, of an active diſpoſition, no ſooner heard but ſhe went out to meet him, leaving *Mary*, the other ſiſter, in the houſe with thoſe who came to condole them:

Martha on the ſight and within ſpeech of her Lord, inſtantly breaks out, as we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, with a pathos ſuited to the concern of her heart, and cries unto Jeſus, (*a*) "*Lord, if thou hadſt been here, my* "*brother had not died.*" Confident of Chriſt's ability to have ſaved her brother from death, and not queſtioning his love, this pious mourner doth not upbraid him, but laments his abſence and the loſs ſhe had ſuſtained with no leſs decency than zeal, and then farther adds, (*b*) "*but I know that even now what-*"*ſoever thou ſhalt aſk of God, God will give it* "*thee*;" intimating hereby a ſtrong deſire, if it was the divine will, to have her brother returned to this life; but there being no promiſe, example, or rational ground to expect the indulgence, ſhe dares not expreſs it; and indeed, from what ſhe declares, verſe 39, it ſeems that however ardently ſhe wiſhed, ſhe was in no expectation of ſeeing *Lazarus* revive. In anſwer to this, Jeſus aſſures her, that her brother ſhould riſe again; to which ſhe replieth, (*c*) "*I know that he ſhall riſe* "*again in the reſurrection at the laſt day.*" The reſurrection of the dead and life everlaſting were known and believed by the faithful

(*a*) John xi. 21. (*b*) John xi. 22. (*c*) John xi. 24.

faithful of old; many of whom, when tortured for the ſake of their conſcience, we are told, *(a) accepted not deliverance, that they might obtain a better reſurrection.* Beſides, *Martha* no doubt had heard this doctrine from the Saviour himſelf; yet ſhe ſeemed not to underſtand the myſtery of the reſurrection, which is in Chriſt the inheritance of the ſaints, or to be acquainted with (*b*) the power of Jeſus as a divine perſon, able of himſelf to quicken and raiſe the dead at his will; our Lord therefore proceeds to inſtruct her into this bleſſed truth, ſaying, *(c)* "*I am the reſurrection and the life.*" There is a reſurrection *(d)* both of the juſt and of the unjuſt, when they that are in the graves ſhall come forth *(e)* to damnation or to life: but the latter is emphatically ſtyled *the reſurrection.* Thus we read of the *(f)* children of God being the *children of the reſurrection,*

(a) Heb. xi. 35. *(b)* By *Martha*'s expreſſions, verſes 20, 21, ſhe ſeems not to apprehend that Chriſt had a power in himſelf either to have ſaved her brother's life, or to raiſe him after his deceaſe: had ſhe clearly underſtood his proper Deity, ſhe muſt have known he could have prevented his death at a diſtance, or revived him from the dead without a ſpecial licence from heaven.

(c) John xi. 25. *(d)* Acts xxiv. 15.
(e) John v. 29. *(f)* Luke xx. 36.

rection, i. e. a glorious revival connected with life everlaſting, the circumſtances of which are largely ſet forth in the ſecond epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, chap. xv.

Now Jeſus is this reſurrection, as he is the cauſe, author, and firſt fruits thereof; and, being thus the reſurrection and the life, he declares, "*he that believeth in me though* "*he was dead yet ſhall he live*;" which ſeems to be to let *Martha* know that he was able to raiſe from the dead, and conſequently to reſtore her brother from the grave; but to carry her thoughts ſtill higher, and to ſhew that he was *the life* in a nobler ſenſe than that of raiſing the body from the ſtate of natural death, which yet required a divine power, he further ſubjoins the ſentence before us, "*And whoſoever liveth and be-* "*lieveth in me ſhall never die.*" Thus our text ſtands introduced, and I am led,

Secondly, To open its contents, which are plainly a ſubject deſcribed and his happineſs inſured. The ſubject is deſcribed as *living and believing*, and he is inſured of *never dying*: a ſublime and intereſting clauſe! Bleſſed, for ever bleſſed the man in whom this word is fulfilled! It ſets forth the ſtate and hope of the faithful, and is a paſſage

full

full of myſtery and comfort, in examining of which I ſhall attend to the following method, namely:

I. Conſider the *life* which the believer is here ſuppoſed to ſuſtain.

II. Enquire what is contained in the *faith* aſcribed to him. And,

III. State the ſenſe in which they who anſwer the character ſhall *never die*.

I. What is that life which the believer is here ſuppoſed to ſuſtain? *Whoſoever liveth.* Some apply this to them who ſhall be *(a)* alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, for we *ſhall not all ſleep*; but this is a ſenſe too confined, and foreign to the ſubject in hand, which is that of Chriſt's being the life included in, or conſequent upon a reſurrection from the dead. Nor do I think this ſentence hath any immediate reference to the reſurrection itſelf; it is indeed a comfortable truth, that after the ſaints are quickened, death ſhall no more have dominion over them; and the life unto which the ſaints ſhall

(a) 1 Theſ. iv. 15. 1 Cor. xv. 1.

ſhall be raiſed, will remain for ever; but our Lord deſcribes the ſubject as *believing*, which is inconſiſtent with his *enjoying* the reſurrection unto life. I am aware that ſome underſtand the clauſe immediately preceding of the ſaints in the exerciſe of faith after their deceaſe, relating to the redemption of their bodies, the propriety of which I ſhall not enquire into. However, faith can have no place in the light of that glorious morning, when each that ſleeps in Jeſus, ſhall, with his own eyes, and not another's, behold his living Redeemer. Beſides, the text runs in the *preſent time*, nor is there any reaſon for deviating from the expreſſion; the believing ſubject is repreſented as *now* ſuſtaining that life our Saviour intends and therefore it is not to be taken for a life that is *future*. Now, the believer liveth in a twofold ſenſe, to wit, *naturally* and *ſpiritually*, and both are included in this deſcription of the man that may hope he ſhall never die, and in each point of light ſeveral hints of inſtruction ariſe.

It may be applied to the believers natural life. *He that liveth*, i. e. in the body of his fleſh, on earth, and *believeth in me*: And, from the words in this ſenſe we learn,

1. That the preſent life is the time for obtaining of faith. Faith comes by hearing; but there

there is no preaching in the grave, to any impenitent ſeparate ſpirit. Chriſt's local deſcent into hell, the place of torments where the departed ſouls of the guilty are held, hath been vainly conceived, from a paſſage of *(a) Peter* the apoſtle: for we know that our Saviour aſcended from the croſs into heaven; and, it is evident that, this preaching was not by him perſonally, but by his Spirit, and that not after his manifeſtation in the fleſh, but in the days of Noah, which was before thoſe miſerable tranſgreſſors were caſt into priſon. No, Sirs, *(b) now is the accepted time, now is the day of ſalvation*; let each then beware; for no goſpel is heard in the unſeen ſtate, or door of hope opened to the man that dies in his ſins; he that dies without faith, ſhall have his portion with unbelievers. A conſideration that may juſtly awaken careleſs hearers of the word. Again,

2. This expreſſion applied to the natural life of the believer is for the encouragement of ſenſible ſinners, who are convinced, after having long continued in rebellion againſt God. Some are called at the eleventh hour, and ſuch are frequently tempted to deſpond in the view of a life ſpent in ſin, and juſt

(a) 1 Pet. iii. 19. (b) 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2.

cauſe ſuch have to be humble, but not to deſpair. Fear not, O penitent Soul; it appears that, as it is poſſible that the oldeſt offender may be converted and brought to believe, ſo he that obtains this mercy, however late in his day, is admitted to the hope of life everlaſting. The text is without limitation; *Whoſoever liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die.* No repenting tranſgreſſor whatever is excepted from the promiſe. And further,

3. This ſenſe of the paſſage ſhews that the life which the true Chriſtian lives in the body is a life of faith, of which the apoſtle *Paul* is an example, who declares: *(a) The life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.* But to proceed,

II. It is agreeable to the ſcope and myſtery of this place, to apply the expreſſion to the ſpiritual life of the believer. The Man that believeth in Chriſt is the happy ſubject of a new and ſpiritual life, *(b)* being born of the Spirit, and *(c)* quickened when dead in treſpaſſes and ſins. *He that liveth*, i. e. he that is alive from the dead, being quickened by the Spirit and grace of God, " *and believeth*

(a) Gal. ii. 20. *(b)* John i. 13. *(c)* Eph. ii. 1.

lieveth in me," and in this point of light it imports 1. The neceſſity of regeneration, in order to faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which no one can doubt who knows the ſtate of the carnal mind: we are told it is *(a) enmity againſt God*, and therefore utterly incapable of receiving the promiſe, and reſting on the Saviour. So then, *(b) except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God*; there muſt be divine life in the ſubject, previous to his believing with the heart unto righteouſneſs. Again,

2. This view of the paſſage ſuggeſts that they who are thus effectually called, will believe in the Lord Jeſus; neither is this to be queſtioned; for he that is quickened from Chriſt, and thereby vitally engrafted in him, will naturally cleave unto him for life and ſalvation. And it may further be conſidered as pointing out:

3. That this life will continue; it ſhall not fail, but be maintained for ever, agreeable to the promiſe in the text. Thus the life, the believer is here ſuppoſed to ſuſtain, comprehends both his natural and his ſpiritual exiſtence; and being applied to each, the deſcription plainly extends to every man

(a) Rom. viii. 7. (b) John iii. 3.

living who being quickened by divine grace, believes on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; now, whoever anſwers to this deſcription whether young or old, or whatever may be his condition or character in other reſpects, he may aſſure himſelf of the promiſe; but of this, in its place. We now paſs,

II. To enquire what is contained in the *faith* aſcribed to the ſubject. He is repreſented not only as *living*, but alſo *believing in Chriſt*. Now wherein conſiſts that faith in Chriſt which here ſtands connected with life everlaſting? It would be too much to mention, and ſtill more to examine the various conceptions of men concerning this intereſting queſtion, ſome of which are without ſavor of the ſcriptures, or the power of God. This faith in Jeſus doth not eſſentially conſiſt in a full aſſurance of intereſt in him, which is the happy attainment of ſome; if this kind of aſſurance was eſſential to believing in Chriſt, there could be no degrees of faith, and every doubt of ſalvation would determine the ſubject in a ſtate of unbelief; which none will defend: nor is an high confidence of being in Chriſt always well grounded; for ſcripture and experience ſhew that men may preſume, and ſome are bold, in

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aſſuming this to themſelves, who yield no ſufficient proof of their contrition for ſin, and repentance unto life, without which all pretence of faith in the Saviour is vain. Again,

Neither is this faith fully contained in any kind, or degree of knowledge, or perſuaſion of the truth. The cleareſt ideas and higheſt credit of the goſpel report are not ſufficient to that believing in Chriſt, with which the promiſe of life is connected. A natural man may be fully perſuaded of the truth of divine revelation; as *(a)* Agrippa believed the prophets, and in fact like him be no real Chriſtian. A perſon may credit what is declared in the New Teſtament concerning Jeſus, whom the Father raiſed from the dead: he may be convinced that the Son of God was manifeſted in the fleſh, that he died and revived in the manner thoſe Scriptures relate; yea, he may be much affected with their account of the dignity of his perſon, his divine office, his ſacrifice, all perfect righteouſneſs, reſurrection, and glorified ſtate, and yet be a ſtranger to that faith which is of the operation of God. True faith indeed proceeds from an enlightened underſtanding,

(a) Acts xxvi. 27.

derſtanding, and the illuminations of the Spirit in the regenerate poſſeſs the ſubject with a full perſuaſion of the reality, nature, importance, and excellency of Chriſt, the ſalvation of God, without which believing in him is utterly impoſſible: hence they who are called, are ſaid to have *(a) an underſtanding in him that is true*; and again; *this (b) is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent*; but it doth not follow that nothing more is included in believing on Chriſt than this divine knowledge. I am ſenſible that ſome great men have ſeated all that is eſſential to ſaving faith in the underſtanding only; nevertheleſs, I humbly apprehend that true faith is rather the conſequence of knowledge and perſuaſion, than perſuaſion itſelf, in which the ſubject is paſſive; whereas the Scriptures conſider the believer as active; and, can there be an act even of the underſtanding ſtrictly and properly excluſive of the will? But, whatever opinions prevail concerning faith, conſidered abſtractly, as a principal reſident in them that are called, it is certain that believing on Chriſt to life everlaſting, which makes up the character of the faithful, is a practical and

(a) 1 John v. 20. (b) John xvii. 3.

and experimental thing, and I think may be defined thus; "it is an act of the renewed ſoul, under the influence of divine grace, wherein all its powers are exerted; or in Scripture language *(a)* a believing with *all the* heart; *(b) for with the* heart *man believeth unto righteouſneſs.* Faith therefore carries in it nothing leſs than a cordial truſt and reliance on the Redeemer.

Truth, or the word of God ſtrictly ſpeaking, is not the ultimate, or indeed the proper object of ſaving faith; it is one thing to believe the word of Chriſt, and another thing to truſt him on the credit of that divine teſtimony; the diſtinction to me is real, plain, and important; that credit which is raiſed in the heart of him that is effectually called unto an abſolute dependance on the promiſe of the goſpel, wherein Jeſus is revealed, and his truſt in Jeſus under the ſame divine influence, are not to be confounded; in the latter, which is the ſubject in hand, the immediate and proper object is the perſon of Chriſt, and no other.

That to believe, in a goſpel ſenſe, conſiſts in the ſubjects committing himſelf to the Lord, and includes an habitual reliance upon him for life

(a) Acts viii. 37. (b) Rom. x. 10.

life and ſalvation is clear from the current of Scripture, in which to believe and to truſt are ſynonymous phraſes, and that the Lord himſelf is the object of this faith is moſt unreaſonable to deny. The righteous, who are the ſame with believers, are continually deſcribed as truſting in the Lord. (a) *Truſt ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlaſting ſtrength:* And again, (b) *I will truſt and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my ſtrength.* Thus God is the object of the believer's truſt, and (c) *bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him*; for (d) *they that truſt in the Lord ſhall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.* In like manner, in the New Teſtament, the primitive Chriſtians are repreſented as thoſe (e) *who firſt truſted in Chriſt.* And the apoſtle Paul, when reflecting on his hope, in the near views of departing this life, declares: (f) *I know whom I have believed*, or truſted, *and am perſuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him.* Here you ſee *knowledge* diſtinguiſhed from *believing*, in the account which the apoſtle gives of his faith; in which place we may alſo clearly diſcern

(a) Iſaiah xxvi. 4. (b) Chap. xii. 2. (c) Pſ. xi. 12. (d) Pſal. cxxv. 1. (e) Epheſ. i. 12. (f) 2 Tim. i. 12.

cern that the faith which will yield a man courage in the hour of death, hath a *perſon*, even the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for its object, and conſiſts not in bare knowledge or perſuaſion, but includes a practical reſt and confidence in him. In one word, from the text itſelf, we are furniſhed with a compleat deſcription of the faith which our Saviour intends; the ſubject is alive, being quickened and renewed by the Spirit of God, the certain and immediate object is Chriſt himſelf, the eſſential form of the act is truſt or dependance, and the end is life everlaſting. Thus in the idea of that faith which belongs to the real Chriſtian, is included a perſonal truſt and cordial reliance on his Lord; which holy confidence, as might be eaſily ſhewn, is inſeparably connected with the love of God, and promotes a converſation becoming the goſpel: every notion of faith ſhort of this actual ſurrender and habitual dependance on Chriſt, will hereafter be found a vain ſpeculation, to the diſappointment of thoſe who embrace it; but he that hath obtained mercy thus to believe, and is enabled thus to live, relying on Jeſus, tho' perhaps weak in faith, and incapable of unravelling the ſubtleties of thoſe who would ſet atnought his experience, may reſt ſatisfied, having here a divine warrant to aſſure himſelf that he *ſhall never die*,

the import of which remains to be ſhewn, and accordingly I proceed,

III. To ſtate the ſenſe in which they who anſwer the character *ſhall never die*. 'Tis an hard ſaying, yet eaſily reſolved on the principles of divine revelation: to underſtand this of natural death would be to contradict the well-known decree of the Almighty, univerſal experience, and alſo the ſcope of the place, which is to comfort the ſaints in the view of death, and concerning thoſe who are fallen aſleep; but ſcarce any will be ſo unreaſonable and perverſe as to interpret this clauſe of the body in its preſent ſtate of exiſtence, which muſt certainly die. Here is a deep myſtery, but no abſurdity. It is variouſly explained; ſome ſay the ſoul of the faithful ſhall never die, but, in a natural ſenſe, this is true of the wicked as well as the righteous, there is no eſſential difference in this reſpect; the ſouls of both are immortal, but it is peculiar to the believer never to die, in the ſenſe of our text. And if we apply it to the happineſs of the ſeparate ſpirit in Paradiſe, it will not fully come up to the tenor of the words, which ſpeak of the believers perſon without exception, nor is there any cogent reaſon for excluding the body. Some others explain it of the final perſeverance of the

the ſaints, and true it is that he, who being quickened by grace, liveth believing on the Son of God, ſhall never again fall under the power of ſpiritual death; for that a divine life begun in the ſoul ſhall certainly be maintained and carried on to perfection, is plain, from the paſſage before us, as I ſhall quickly obſerve; but the perſeverance of the ſaints reſpects the preſent life only, whereas the promiſe in our text plainly refers to that which is future. Some render the words, and they may be read thus; *he ſhall not die eternally*, or *in eternity*; yet I apprehend that this alone is not ſufficient. The phraſe in general expreſſeth a ſtate of life, and determines that ſtate to be everlaſting; it comprehends all that is eſſential to the believers perfect and endleſs felicity, and may be reduced to the following particulars, namely;

1. It includes a juſtified ſtate. He ſhall *never die*, i. e. he never ſhall be condemned. Eternal life, in one view of it, ſtands oppoſed to a charge of guilt, which by the threatning of the law obligeth to death; thus it is written; *(a) He that believeth hath everlaſting life, and ſhall not come into condemnation.* In this reſpect the believer is paſſed from death

(a) John v. 24.

unto life, and ſhall no more be brought under a judiciary ſentence; for he is not under the law, but under grace. Again,

2. It carries in it a ſecurity from the ſecond death. We read of a ſecond death, which you know is the puniſhment a ſin-hating God will inflict on the workers of iniquity in the day of his wrath. The pains of this death muſt be dreadful indeed, ſince they who come under it are repreſented as caſt into *(a) the lake of fire*, to denote it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, to whom vengeance belongeth; but *(b)* Jeſus hath deliver'd his people from judgment to come, and believers *(c) being now juſtified by his blood, ſhall* certainly *be ſaved from wrath through him.* And further,

3. It comprehends, and indeed ſeems chiefly to deſign, the everlaſting fruition of God in the heavenly world, or manſions of bliſs; this takes in the pleaſures that ariſe from the divine communion with which the ſpirits of the juſt are ſolaced in a ſeparate ſtate; but eſpecially refers to the more perfect happineſs that will enſue on their reſurrection from the dead, to the certain hope of which the faithful are called. There ſhall then be no more

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(a) Rev. xx. 15. *(b)* 1 Theſ. i. 10.
(c) Rom. v. 9.

more death, when the bodies of the ſaints, being changed, and faſhioned like that of their Saviour's, ſhall each be reunited to his own; then will he (*a*) *preſent them faultleſs before the preſence of his glory, with exceeding joy*, and they ſhall be, and live (*b*) *for ever with the Lord.*

Thus we have conſidered the contents of this bleſſed aſſurance, in which the true Chriſtian's happineſs is deſcribed; and this is the ſum; namely, that every man living, who believeth in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, i. e. having by faith committed himſelf into the hands of the Redeemer, in a full perſuaſion of his grace, habitually relieth upon him for life, *ſhall never die*; the wrath of God ſhall not come upon him; but on the diſſolution of his mortal body he ſhall enter into peace, until that illuſtrious morning, when the children of the reſurrection ſhall come forth to life everlaſting. Thus ſhall the Chriſtian live,—and die no more! And this glorious hope hath every Believer: A hope that is eſtabliſhed on the teſtimony of Jeſus himſelf; the Amen, the faithful and true witneſs, and the firſt-begotten from the dead, whoſe complete ſatisfaction for ſin is an

(*a*) Jude xxiv. (*b*) 1 Theſ. iii. 17.

an undeniable pledge of his people's obtaining the incorruptible inheritance. It remains,

Thirdly. To addreſs you on the ſubject by way of reflection; and many particulars might be advanced for our inſtruction and comfort on this encouraging report: but I ſhall only remark one truth that reſults from the promiſe; excite your application of what hath been ſaid, take ſome notice of our friend, whoſe deceaſe hath occaſioned the preſent diſcourſe, and then cloſe with a word or two of advice.

The doctrine I note hath already been hinted: It is no other than the final perſeverance of the ſaints. A doctrine oppoſed by ſome; but of great importance in the hope of a Chriſtian. If theſe words are true, the uncomfortable notion of a believer's apoſtacy is abſolutely falſe. Nothing can be more oppoſite to the text than this erroneous opinion, and the man who, in a juſt view of this declaration, will teach that the faith of the called is liable to fail, ſo as that the ſubject may finally periſh, muſt be more than commonly bold. To aſſert that a real believer may eternally periſh, is it not as much as to ſay, that he may *die for ever?* And what is this but a direct and daring contradiction to the expreſs words of our Saviour,

who

who ſaith, he ſhall *never die?* A continuance in the faith is abſolutely needful to the enjoyment of life; but the promiſe of life is given to the believer as ſuch; the moment a man commences a real believer in Chriſt he is entitled to expect he ſhall never die in a goſpel ſenſe, as explained, if therefore this promiſe is certain it inſures perſevering grace to the believer in order to its accompliſhment; for otherwiſe it might be in vain. So then we may rejoice in this paſſage among many others which abundantly prove that *whoſoever* believeth in Chriſt, *(a) ſhall not periſh but have everlaſting life.*

And now, my dear friends, I beſeech you ſeriouſly to conſider this excellent truth, which ſo nearly concerns you. What a myſtery of grace it contains! How important an intereſt therein! Permit me to awaken each one's attention by means of the ſame queſtion our Lord put to Martha. *Believeſt thou this?* Some believe not; hardened thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin, they are ſenſual, or being given up to the deluſive imaginations of a ſceptical mind, they aſſent not unto, but rather contradict, the report of

(a) John iii. 15.

of the goſpel: There are not wanting for thoſe who queſtion, or it may be deny the reſurrection, and thereby deſtroy the hope advanced in the text, which plainly extends to a future life in the body, notwithſtanding the intervention of natural death, and conſequently implieth a reſurrection from the dead. I truſt you are not of this number, but if I ſpeak to any leaning this way I intreat him to conſider the perverſeneſs and danger of that unbelief to which he is prone; to reject this glorious truth becauſe of the myſtery there is in a proper reſurrection is extremely abſurd, and will hereafter be found quite inexcuſable; for, beſides the example of Jeſus, and others who roſe from the dead, to pronounce a reſurrection incredible is to violate reaſon, as the apoſtle ſuggeſts in his noble defence at *Cæſaria*; (a) ſaying, *why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible with you that God ſhould raiſe the dead?* However the manner in which the dead riſe paſſeth underſtanding; you ſee there is a power revealed, equal to the important and wonderful event. It is *God* that raiſeth the dead; to deem a reſurrection impoſſible with him is, in effect, to deny the omnipotence of

(a) Acts xxvi. 8.

of Jehovah, which is againſt the light of nature itſelf, and is ſhameful. Infidels often affect to be wiſe; but their folly is manifeſt and, unleſs they repent, the reaſon they boaſt will witneſs to their confuſion, when (*a*) all that are in the graves ſhall hear the laſt trumpet ſound, and come forth to judgment.

But, as I obſerved, I preſume that few, if any, in this aſſembly are to be ranked among thoſe who deny the reſurrection: indeed I am not ſufficiently acquainted with individuals preſent, to ſay to one and another, with the apoſtle, (*b*) *I know thou believeſt*; but certain it is, that a man may credit the veracity of ſcripture, and of our text among the reſt; and yet come ſhort of true chriſtianity; he may be a ſervant of ſin, and ſlight or reject the ſalvation of God, to his ruin; and is there no room to fear that this may be the caſe of ſome one of you? Therefore be not offended, O hearer, that in compaſſion to thy ſoul, I purſue the queſtion and appeal to thy conſcience; *believeſt thou this?* Doſt thou believe that whoſoever liveth, and truſteth in Chriſt, ſhall never die; and canſt thou be indifferent about being one

(*a*) John v. 28, 29. 1 Cor. xv. 52, compared.
(*b*) Acts xxvi. 27.

of thoſe who believe in him to ſalvation? Art thou a ſtranger to repentance and faith in the Saviour, who is alive from the dead, and without a good hope of living hereafter through him; and on the credit of this report, canſt thou ſeriouſly reflect, and be eaſy a moment? How amazingly ſtupid is this! If the text is true, which you will not deny, muſt not a neglect of Chriſt and his grace be criminal and dangerous? Conſider, he who dieth an unbeliever ſhall never ſee life? And what is the conſequence; but, far be it from you! Death everlaſting? O my friend, believe it; as there is *a life*, there is likewiſe *a death* beyond the grave, of which natural death is but the forerunner and image, to them who die in their ſins! Without hope of that life revealed in the goſpel, 'tis fearful to die! Let not my freedom diſpleaſe you; whatever your preſent thoughts may be, hereafter you will own that plain dealing in this important affair is moſt becoming. You know the ſum of the report which our Lord ordained to be publiſhed in the world. (a) *He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.*

(a) Mark xvi. 16.

damned. Thus you will find it; therefore be not deceived.

But I hope many preſent not only credit the contents of this paſſage, and aſſent to the ſame, as a true propoſition, but are likewiſe acquainted with its ſaving effect unto the obtaining that faith in Chriſt, which is unto life. Have you, my friend, fled to Jeſus, as the only and all-ſufficient Saviour, and doth your conſcience bear witneſs that he is the object of your unfeigned truſt and hearty reliance? What a glorious proſpect is here ſet before you! How animating! How joyful the aſſurance! *Never die!* What would not a worldly man give, whoſe portion is here, to have this promiſe inſured or effectually applied to the preſent ſtate? The rich ſinner, when ſenſibly approaching his end, would doubtleſs give all that he hath to obtain a *new* and *long* leaſe of his life, but, *never to die*, or to *live for ever* in this world; how would he eſteem it! An heaven indeed! Such men have no hope in Chriſt, no reliſh for a divine life, or proſpect of future happineſs; hence, if they could, they would abide here without any change; alas for them! Their wiſhes are vain, they go down to the duſt with regret and deſpair! Not ſo

the man that hath ſeen the evil of ſin, and whoſe peace is derived from the ſacrifice of Jeſus, who hath a taſte of true holineſs, and communion with God, reconciled by the blood of his Son, the earneſt of glory. He may indeed be timorous, and ſtart at the pains to which human nature is liable, or doubt his behaviour in the ſolemn hour, but he would not live always; his judgment, affections, and hope incline him to deſire, and ſometimes he is ardently wiſhing for his houſe which is from heaven, in the aſſured proſpect of which, with the conſideration of his being at beſt attended with uncertainty, darkneſs, and ſin, in this life, renders a continuance here diſagreeable, and makes him willing to depart and to be with Chriſt, which is far better than any preſent ſituation.

Look forward, O Chriſtian, with joy! You are indeed ſurrounded with ſnares, and expoſed to loſſes, diſtreſſes, and death; but lo! your Redeemer is mighty! Hear what he ſaith: *You ſhall never die*; you ſhall therefore ſurvive all changes and temptations of every kind, and diſappoint the envy and oppoſition of the enemy, and at length triumph over the grave. Thus, in this divine promiſe, believers are ſupported in that holy confidence expreſſed by the apoſtle, *We are*

more

more than conquerors through him that loved us. (a)

On the credit of this declaration, the man that truſteth in Chriſt hath nothing to fear in life, or at death; to him all things are poſſible. As I hinted, one deſign of our Lord was to let *Martha* know that he had more than ſufficient power in himſelf to raiſe her brother; that faith which accounteth its object able to raiſe from the dead, will not fail to poſſeſs the ſubject with a full aſſurance that his God can do all things for him; tho' how it ſhall come to paſs, he cannot conceive. The Lord help us thus to believe.

But 'tis time I touch more directly on the afflicting Providence that hath brought us together this day. The paſſage I have endeavoured to improve, was doubtleſs intended to ſtrengthen the faith, and comfort the heart of a ſorrowful diſciple, who was lamenting the deceaſe of a precious relation, and may it prove a word of comfort to you, my brethren, who now mourn, in the preſence of the Lord, the loſs of one, with whom ſome of you have long took ſweet counſel, both in the houſe of God, and your own.

With reſpect to our friend, the manner of his departure was rather an advantage to him-

(a) Rom. viii. 37.

himſelf than to us: his notice was ſhort. Sudden death, or death by a diſeaſe which immediately ſeizeth the head, and in two or three days puts a period to life, deprives the neareſt relations of an opportunity for converſe with thoſe who are departing, which is very deſirable, as a means of comfort and eſtabliſhment to themſelves and to others. Under theſe circumſtances, we have no peculiar expreſſions to relate from the dying lips of our late dear brother; nor have we any reaſon to murmur at this diſappointment, when we reflect on the full ſatisfaction we had concerning him, and conſider that, to one habitually prepared for the important alteration, as we are perſuaded he was, ſudden death is a glorious change, by which the ſubject, being ſpared from many cruciating ſorrows, which uſually attend a lingring illneſs, is inſtantly placed in the peaceful regions of light. O the raptures of a ſanctified ſoul, on feeling itſelf, as it were in a moment, unexpectedly releaſed from a burthen of ſin and death, and conveyed by the miniſtring angels to the hands of its glorified Saviour, who waits to receive, and to place the unembodied ſpirit in his celeſtial manſion, before the face of his Father! No tongue can expreſs the exultation of the re-

deemed

deemed on this occaſion: it muſt needs be inconceivably great! Nevertheleſs, when our intimate and valuable friends are thus removed from us, and haſtened into an eternal world, it is alarming and awful; and we ſhould be without any excuſe; yea, and no better than ſtupid, if we did not improve ſuch awakening ſtrokes into an argument for our watchfulneſs, ſobriety, and diligence, that we may not be taken unawares. Bleſſed is the man who is found in Jeſus, doing the will of his Lord at his coming, which is near, but uncertain; therefore let us be ready.

The worthy perſon we lament, having been employed between thirty and forty years in the miniſtry among you, his character is too well known to need my being very particular: I appeal to you who have been under his care, and to all who knew him, for his becoming converſation; amidſt his infirmities and trials, did not your late miniſter approve himſelf a diligent and faithful ſervant of God and your ſouls? Are you not witneſſes of his behaviour, that it was holy and unblameable before you; and was he not an example of the faith which he preached? An illuſtration of the grace and good works

of

of the righteous is reſerved for another day, when it ſhall be the honor of the ſaints to be confeſſed by the Judge, their Saviour, from his throne, in the preſence of God, yet it is decent, and uſeful to call to mind thoſe who have been enabled to walk well under a profeſſion of religion, and eſpecially thoſe who have ſo done in a public character, which we know is attended with peculiar temptations. (*a*) *Remember* (ſaith the apoſtle) *your guides, who have ſpoken unto you the word of God, whoſe faith follow, conſidering the end of their converſation.* You will hearken, beloved, to this exhortation. Think my friends, how you have behaved, and ſee what improvement you have made under his miniſtry: you muſt ſhortly give an account with him who watched for your ſouls. He was a perſon of conſiderable abilities, which he chearfully exerted for your advantage, and 'tis hoped not in vain. Permit me to ſay concerning this pious and excellent man, now taken away, when I conſider the ſweetneſs of his temper, his humility and candor, joined to a ſteady adherence to the truth he embraced; when I conſider how inſtructive and

(*a*) Heb. xiii. 7.

and pleaſing his diſcourſes in public and private were to many; and, in a word, how *good*, as well as *juſt* a man this amiable perſon was; characters too often ſeparated, but on the union of which the viſible glory of a chriſtian depends: I ſay, when I conſider theſe things, it is not aſtoniſhing to me, that he was ſo univerſally eſteemed by wiſe and good men, with whom he converſed.

Suffer me farther to note (for ſince I am ſpeaking, I cannot omit it) ſuffer me, I ſay to remark the patience and fortitude of this chriſtian miniſter, under ſome great diſcouragements. I am perſuaded, many of you have reaſon to bleſs God for his labours; yet 'tis well known that he had not that degree of viſible ſucceſs with which ſome have been favoured. Even an increaſing audience and church-ſtate may be attended with afflicting circumſtances; but to find numbers leſſen, year after year, is very diſtreſſing indeed. A preacher much followed may well be alive; but he is truly courageous, who is ſteady and chearful, and keeps to his ſtation, when almoſt forſaken.

And ſhall we not mourn ſuch a loſs! yes, my brethren; yet reflect, and be thankful, your paſtor was continued with you ſo long, and be not diſcouraged, but keep to-

gether in the name of the Lord: look unto Jeſus, who, in the days of his fleſh, beheld with compaſſion a people as ſheep without a ſhepherd; he is the head of the body, the church, and is able to help you: and as you would preſerve the purity and peace of the goſpel among you, be careful to receive no man, on any conſideration whatever, who is not well recommended by perſons you know of undoubted reputation; this caution is the more needful, when godly miniſters are ſcarce, and when many lie in wait to intrude themſelves, who are not to the honour of the goſpel. *(a) Watch and pray*, with earneſtneſs and patience; and may the Lord of the harveſt make up your loſs in his own way, and time. I truſt there is no occaſion to plead for your utmoſt regard to the widow and family of the deceaſed, being perſuaded you will think it highly ungrateful, in any inſtance, to ſlight or neglect them. But I muſt draw to a cloſe.

May you, dear Madam, with whom I ſincerely condole, be ſuſtained, and enabled to reſign to the will of the Moſt High, under this heavy affliction. Be not diſmayed;

(a) Matt. xxvi. 41.

mayed; truſt in the Redeemer, he is your maker; he hath ſtiled himſelf your huſband, and the Lord of Hoſts is his name. In the midſt of your ſorrows, may you not, with ſome degree of pleaſure, reflect on the well-grounded aſſurance you have that the late choice partner of your life is numbered with thoſe bleſſed ones, whom the Lord himſelf hath declared ſhall never die. Believing in Jeſus Chriſt, your glorious Saviour you ſhall alſo live, and ſhall live together with him.

And to you, my young friends, who juſtly lament the guide of your youth. It muſt be owned indeed, that great is your loſs, and I ſympathize with you; yet, while you mourn his departure, forget not the kindneſs of the Lord, and be thankful he was ſpared to help you thus far; remember his counſels, and watch againſt ſin; and may the gracious hand of your heavenly Father, which upheld him ſo many years in your favour, continue to lead and protect you. You need not be told that a moſt dutiful carriage towards your affectionate ſurviving mother is incumbent upon you, as you expect to ſucceed in your day; may ſpecial grace be vouchſafed

you, that living and believing in the ſame almighty Saviour, in the faith of whom your late father died, you may likewiſe obtain life everlaſting.

And now, may the opening of this joyful aſſurance, by the bleſſing of God, promote in us all a life of faith in his Son, whereby the fears of death may be diſſipated, our corruptions mortified, and our ſouls enlivened with an hope of obtaining the eternal inheritance. O let us die daily to ſin, and live unto righteouſneſs, that it may appear that we are heirs of the grace of life! In one word, as partakers of this grace, let us walk in love, looking for the Saviour from heaven, being fully ſatisfied that we ſhall awake in his likeneſs, and enter into the kingdom of our Father together, and be everlaſting companions in glory.

FINIS.

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